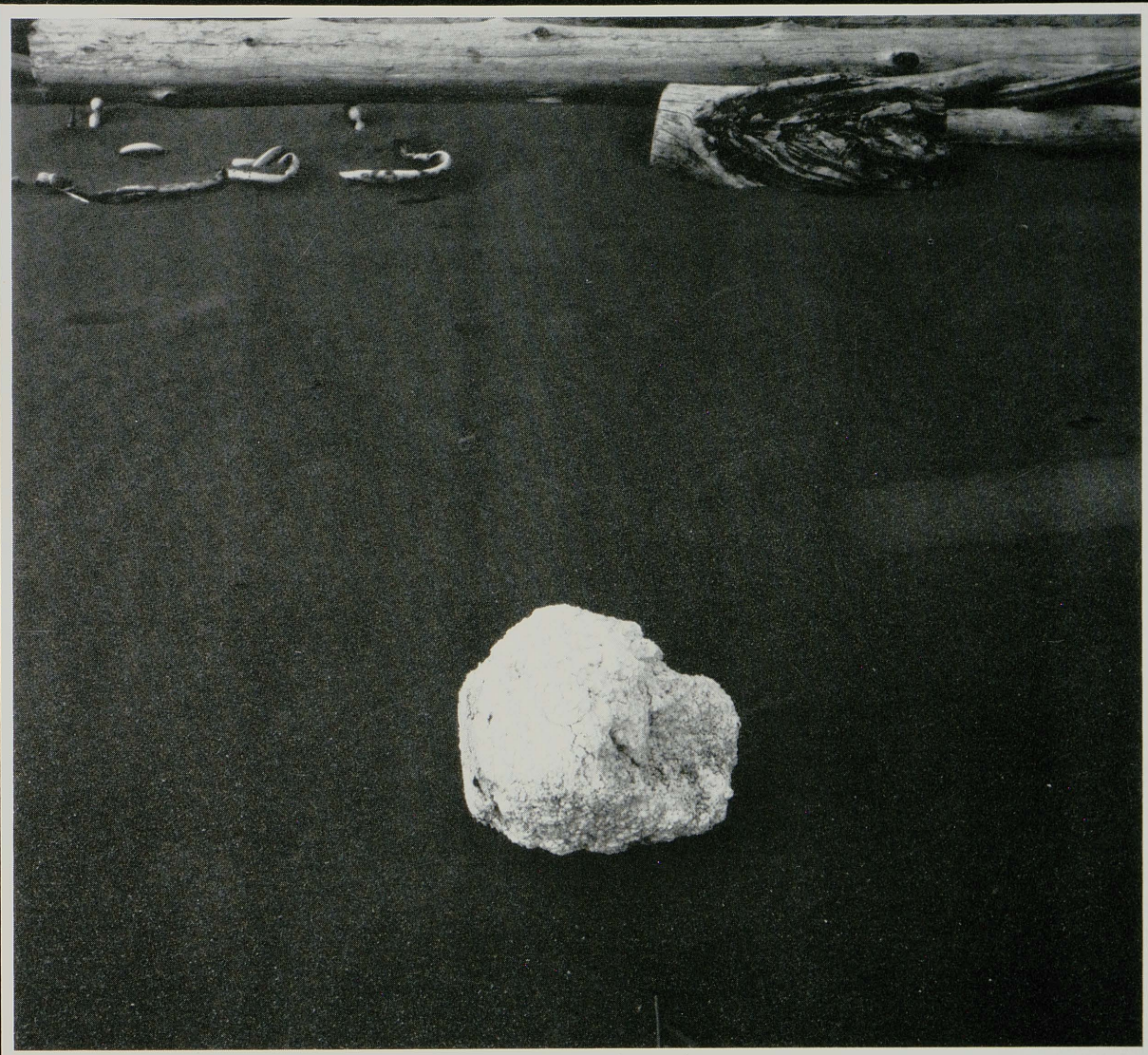


TJC Touchstone

Spring 1986





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TJC Touchstone, Volume 1,
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Tyler Junior College

About the title:

A distinctive streak left on a black touchstone when rubbed with a genuine silver or gold was a foolproof test which allowed ancient civilizations to trust using coins in trade. We trust that you too will find genuine, distinctive elements of value in the *TJC Touchstone*.

Carolyn Hendon
March 1986

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Foreword

This, the first literary magazine for Tyler Junior College, is a proud salute to the Texas Sesquicentennial and to TJC's 60th Anniversary. Its poems, pictures and prose celebrate both the diversity of our heritage and the promises of our present through the theme, "Nostalgia and Now."

Planned in conjunction with the College's community service philosophy, this publication aims to present a broad spectrum of original, creative works produced by any person enrolled in any class or employed at TJC. During the fall and spring of this year, works were solicited and submitted through a system that ensured anonymity of authorship. Then, in keeping with TJC's long-standing commitment to excellence, a student panel of volunteer judges and readers used both objective criteria and sensitivity to content, to sift and study the submissions. Gradually, they selected specific works for publication. Often, only one point separated those marked "include" from others. The final format was left to the journalism classes.

The hopes for this infant are that it values tolerance and truth, that it shares laughter and tears, that it grows to be whole and wise; that it, in truth be a touchstone to the human spirit.

Noamie Byrum

TJC Touchstone sponsor



HUNTING CABIN by Sherry Pike

Nostalgia and Now



The Music Played On

by Charlotte Allen

Time after time and rhyme after rhyme
The memory unfolds like a moment out of time
When time itself had stopped.

The music flowed like a tumultuous river, unstoppable in its wake
And time breached that moment
When destiny was made and the music played.

I'm approaching the gate of remembrances
Where all our passions and sorrows
Swept in from the yesteryears
Seem to accumulate and overflow
Like a waterfall under a bridge.

And while time was frozen in its pride, the music played on.

It seemed all we could do was dream
For our minds were far from this world.
We were sailing through time effortlessly
As the new dawn unfurled with a sound of an echo.

In some strange twist of universal fate
We were picked to feel the past and the future join
In a union that was like the one we felt
In that moment when time stopped as the city slept unaware.

And while time was frozen in its pride, the music played on.

But as a moth to the light we were drawn
Back to the snare of a touchable reality,
The new day began as the sounds of the city
Welcomed us back to an alien world full of drive and life.

But sometimes a longing drives us back
To a place filled with love and life,
We'll hear the sirens of an unbroken time
And go back to when the music played on endlessly like time itself.

Time after time and rhyme after rhyme
The memory unfolds like a moment out of time
When time itself had stopped.
The music flowed like a tumultuous river, unstoppable in its wake
And time breached that moment
When destiny was made and the music played.

Let's slip back to the time of times
When the music played on
Endlessly like time itself,
While we heard the sounds of a new dawn
As the music played on.



LAST HAUL by Sherry Pike

J.R., We Hardly Know Ye

by Elizabeth Baker

Liquor, wild nights, crooked politicians, naked women, and Texans: the mass media has bottled them together like olives in spicy vinegar and is selling them to the nation. From daytime soap opera to night-time high drama, Texans and their lifestyle of booze, violence and the wicked rich are quickly becoming famous.

Twenty years ago, all Texans were thought to be long, lean, honest cowboys with tenor voices and well-tuned guitars. Cows were

optional. Now, the "Texan" brings to mind visions of limousines, adultery, a Stetson hat and \$500 boots. By some strange Hollywood magic, an entire state has gone from loving its horses to hobnobbing with J.R. in less time than it takes to pay off the mortgage on the ranch.

I was born in Texas and I own a small ranch. I have known cowboys all my life. It is time the world knew that our pickups are not gold-plated and seldom have bull horns mounted on the hood. Most pickups

in our town are dented and have a trailer hooked on with a real live cow inside — or at least something that tells you a cow has definitely been there.

The driver is more likely to have a rusty oil can and a set of jumper cables behind the seat than a guitar, and he won't be wearing a Stetson because he just sold the cow and can't afford to buy beans.

J.R. is bound to be living out there someplace and his lifestyle along with him, but the two of us have

never met.

It is not that I haven't looked for him. I have searched for his arrogant face in the rush-hour traffic of Houston and the airports of Dallas. I have been in brokerage houses listening to the ticker tape rattle off the latest oil prices, but he was nowhere in sight.

The last political campaign I was involved in had dozens of political figures floating around, but those I became personally familiar with turned out to be (horrors) honest! They would make poor material for a TV script.

I have been from Austin to Possum Trot and from Wichita Falls to Leesburg, but J.R. never came into view. The one exception was the time I thought I had cornered him between planes at Love Field.

He stood gloriously attired in an expensive 10-gallon hat, clean-cut

western suit and polished boots. He had a cocktail-hour sophistication and a proud walk. But when I struck up a conversation, he turned out to be a Yankee schoolteacher on vacation who was trying to look inconspicuous.

Somewhere between the Panhandle and the coast, there is bound to be a rip-roaring lifestyle going full blast, but most Texans I know are too busy making a living to see much of it.

Sure, there are honky-tonks and strip joints, massage parlors and bars, located along the highways of most sizable Texas towns, yet they are far outnumbered by civic clubs, clean schools and little parks with babies swinging in the sunshine.

Amazing as it may seem to the soap opera fans in New Jersey, most folks in Texas who sleep together are actually married! I hate to shock

the world, or disillusion Hollywood writers, but they really need to get the facts straight.

I have traveled this state from the desert of the Southwest to the forest of the Northeast and though I have seen many small towns without a honky-tonk, I have never seen one without a church.

Does Hollywood assume Texans who work for a living, deal honestly with their families, stay married to each other and can't play a guitar are such dull clods that no one would be interested in their story? They are wrong.

I know a dozen Texans who fit that description and their life can still move me to laughter, or tears or thrill. Texans don't need to sing tenor or live like J.R. before they are worthy of note. They are in their own day-to-day living some of the most fascinating people on earth.



SPRING PLOWING by Charles Sowders

Texas Now

by Richard A. Carr

I am oil derricks reaching for the sky,
Shrimp trollers returning home with an escort of sea gulls.
I am a pine forest thick,
And Valley crops added to the mix.

I am the Metroplex with concrete arteries,
Small home towns with steeples taller than the shade trees.
I am a factory large and impressive,
A windmill standing alone.

I am the horizon stretching further and further,
A western prairie huddled down to a blue norther.
I am bluebonnets calling from the side of the road,
A sunset like none seen before.

I am the mountains, the lakes, the open fields and shoreline,
But my greatest resource is my citizens and their free minds.

The Old Fortress

by Charlotte Allen

If you go to Texas, drop by San Antone
There is an empty mission with hundred year old stone
Go in and look around, you might not be alone
For the old fortress has a spirit of its own,
There is a sense of pride in the ruins of old
Where men died, years passed, a story thrice told.

Sometimes in the morning when its barely light
Heard are the shouts of a desperate fight,
The swords clash, the rifles bark,
In the stone still to see are the scratches and the marks
Where outnumbered and beleaguered, they stood on their ground
All knowing that they might have to lay their own blood down.

And for the freedom from a cruel tyranny
For thirteen days they held off Santa Anna's army
But the red quarter was out and no mercy shown
All passed on to a final resting home,
Bowie, Crockett, Travis never fought more gallantly
Still, the memory remains of their fight to be free.

If you go to Texas, drop by San Antone
There is an empty mission with hundred year old stone
Go in and look around, you might not be alone
For the old fortress has a spirit of its own;
And from it, a people united, a nation rose and so
In the annals of history as every Texan knows
A place is reserved for the old fortress of Alamo.

Home

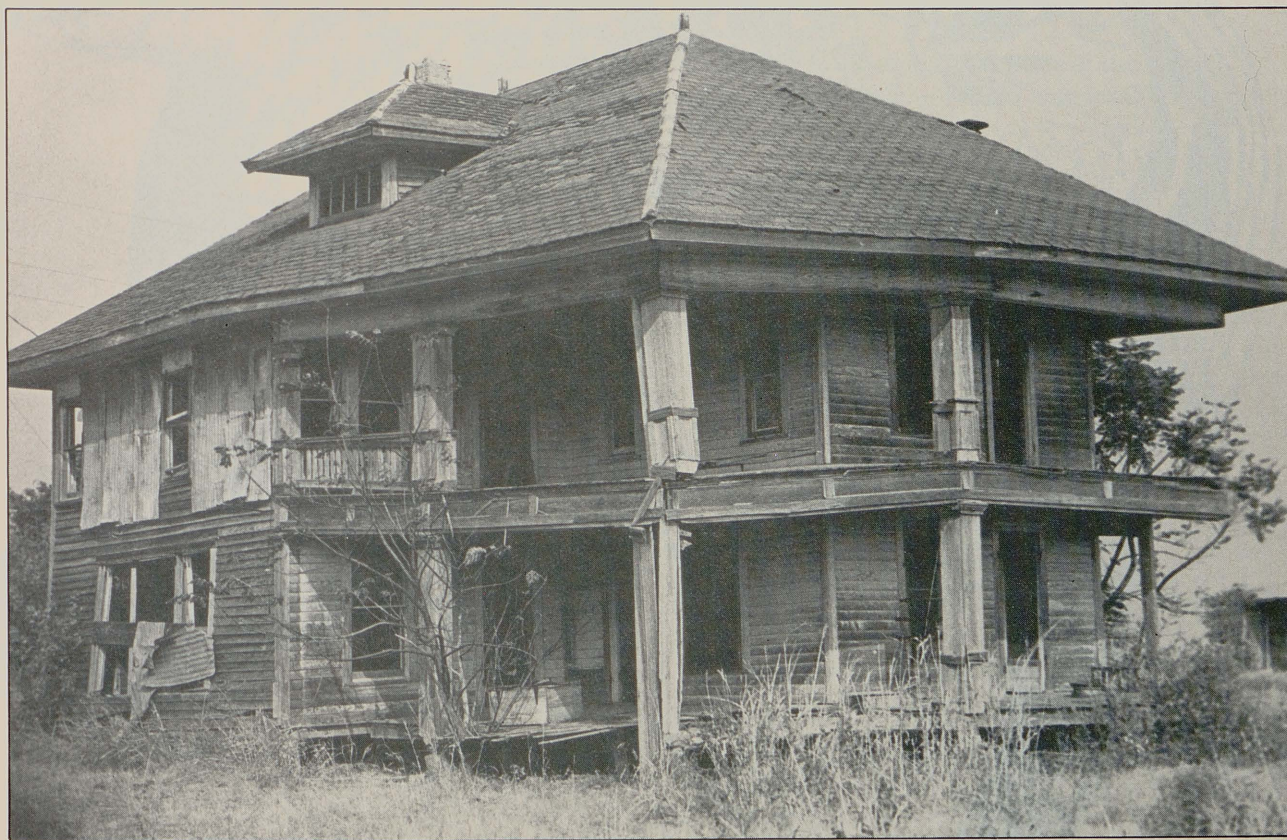
by A.S. Glenn

This land of gentle evening breezes and sweet, fresh showers.
Land of long-tailed road runners and bluebonnet flowers.
With nights full of frogs and coyotes singing;
And days full of sunshine and mockingbirds winging.
This land is home.

This land of sudden violent storms that tear across the ground.
Land of crashing thunderings and lightening striking down.
With springs of tornados and winds that gust;
And summers of droughts and clouds of dust.
This land is home.

This land of icy, snapping frosts and leaves of red and gold.
Land of majestic firs and pines and campfire stories told.
With autumns of harvest and long brisk walks;
And winters of wood fires and late night talks.
This land is home.

Goodbye sweet land. Goodbye sweet friends.
I'll not see you again for a while.



RETIRED HOME by Betty Odom



The Red Man

by Charles Daves

Long years ago, when men were men, and life was truly life;
A man could be provider, with only bow and knife.

The red man ruled this country then, and so he wanted naught.
But the white man came and like cancer; consumed the life he sought.

The red man put on war paint, no talks could make things right.
He must make a stand for freedom, no choice left him but to fight.

A brilliant fighting force they made, as history we review,
And white man's blood flowed cross their land, but victories were too few.

Soon so many grew tired of fighting, they gave up the battle cry.
Condemned to reservations, so slowly they must die.

But a fearless few would not concede, to captivity and defeat.
They vowed their blood to vengeance and knew not the word retreat.

So we called them red and bloody savages, and showered them with hate;
But the only true American was soon to meet his fate.

How is it we could take the home from such a noble race.
And place upon the once clean land such filth and sheer disgrace.

I hope it never be forgotten the white man's sin and greed
That stole away their birthright and crushed this galliant breed.

Yes, we called them red and bloody savages, but even at their worst;
They fought for what belonged to them — *the red man was here first.*

Pain: Past, Present and Future

*by Kenneth
W. Morrow*

Why'd they have to hurt you so
What reason could there be
Someone so gentle, so kind
So undeserving of their torture
What a foolish, unjust thing.

Taking, taking, never understanding why
Just drawing from you whatever they might
When will mankind learn to give
And to let the lovely, like you, live?

If only I could take you in my arms
And erase with an embrace
All the pain that others bestowed upon you
In one instant I'd sweep you off your feet
Mending the hideous wounds left by blundering hearts
With tender lips and a gentle touch.

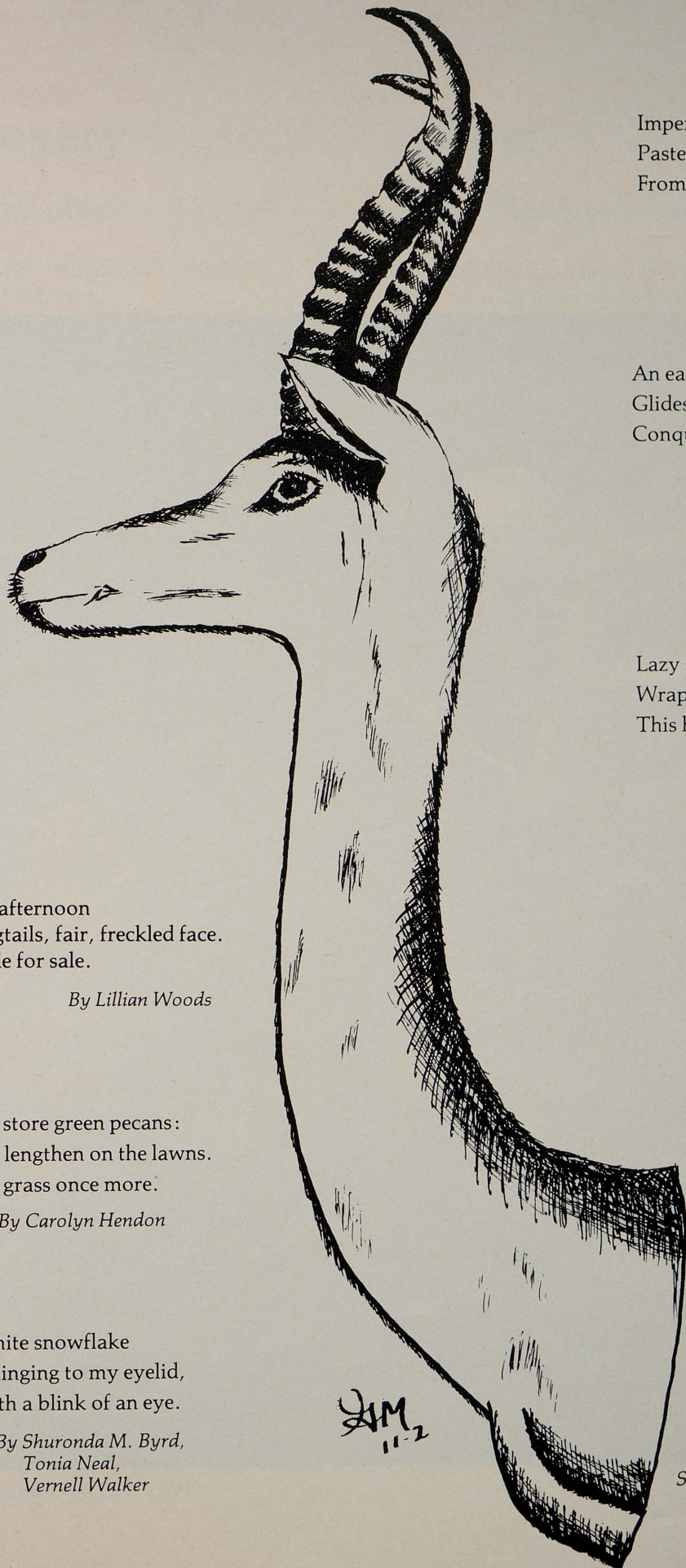
I wish that you could trust again
Be open to my love
I'd approach you with my love offering
Meek and tender like a dove.

Come into my castle
Let me treat you like a royal queen
Bask in joy within protective walls
The palace of my love
Where pain is but a word from outside
And understanding, love, and giving
Stand guard to repel all attackers.

Beware — Small Siplings

by Vianna L. English

Birth sprouts,
Brown stems,
Walk soft,
Watch step,
Only stand,
Oops, Sorry!
Sleep Sweet.



Imperceptively,
Pastels brush the bare landscape
From spring's shy palette.

By Carolyn Hendon

An eagle soars, climbs,
Glides, glides, higher and higher,
Conquers gravity.

*By Kyle Argenbright,
Shelly Dillard,
Vianna L. English,
Mark Leitch*

Lazy sky blue days
Wrapped in Indian blankets
This humid autumn.

By Cindi Bazil

Summer afternoon
Blond pigtailed, fair, freckled face.
Lemonade for sale.

By Lillian Woods

Squirrels store green pecans:
Shadows lengthen on the lawns.
Mow the grass once more.

By Carolyn Hendon

A fat, white snowflake
Lands, clinging to my eyelid,
Melts with a blink of an eye.

*By Shuronda M. Byrd,
Tonia Neal,
Vernell Walker*

STRETCH by Gina Martin



Discovery

by Mary Bruce

One misty day I rummaged through
The attic of my mind,
And found a love I thought was lost
Beneath the dust of time.

It slipped between some memories,
Too fragile to be touched.
For when I lifted it to light,
It crumbled into dust.

Scrapbook in the Attic

by Kenneth W. Morrow

Weeping in the rafters
Sobbing for lost love
Peering hopelessly into the past
At yellow pages through the dust called time.

Oh, the moments we shared together
Staring blankly from glossy poses
A folded kerchief, an old card
Remembered kisses and pressed roses.

A tear falls brutally on the page
Mingled with dust, time, and love
And the tender red of the faded rose.

Lost

by Stephanie Gimble

One day I journeyed far away
From the place where I was born
And I came to a street called Loneliness
In a town they called Forlorn

I tried to return to the home I had loved
But I could not find the way
I didn't belong in the new world
But the old was a lifetime away

No map could give me guidance
No sign pointed here or there
I longed to return to the warmth of my home
But was lost in the chill of despair

No spoken words told me where to turn
But a voice echoed through my heart
Death was the road before me
And the voice whispered over — "Depart"

The Sundial

by Ann Miller

"I count none but sunny hours"

Days past . . . days here.
But past gets closer
And memories strike hard

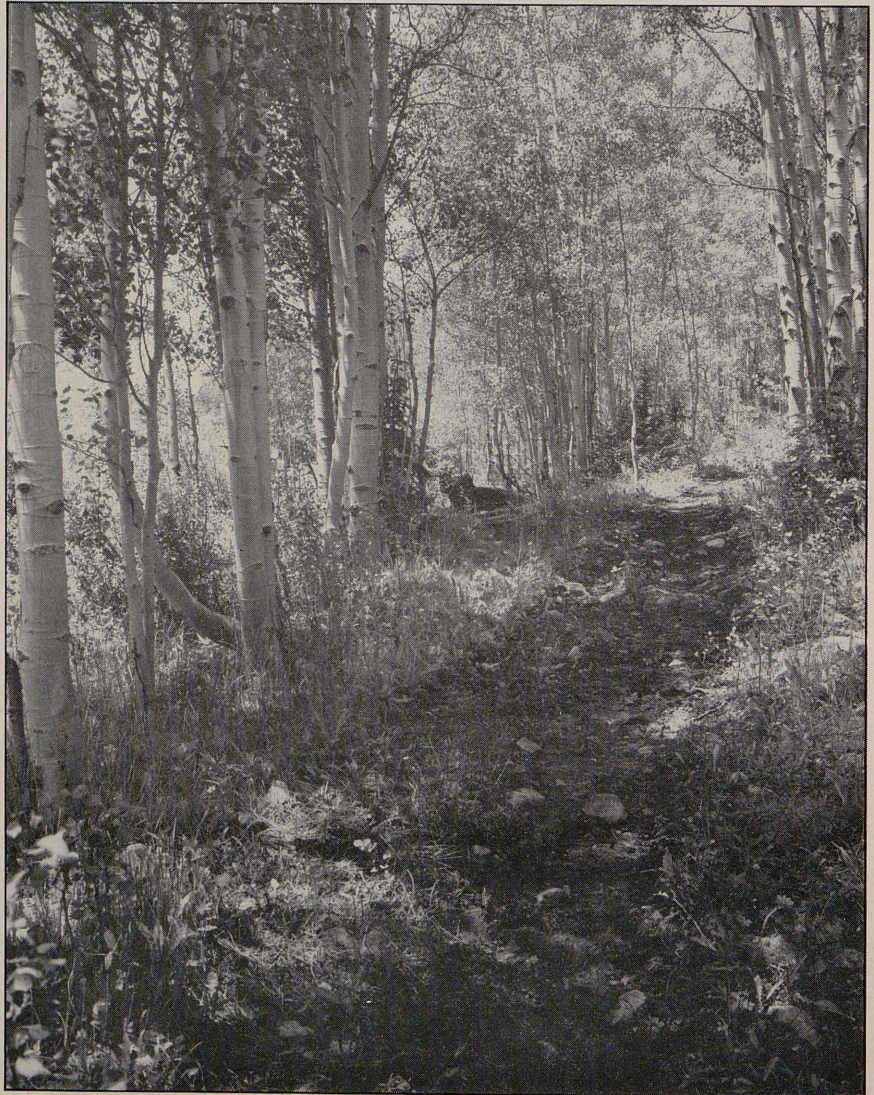
Or tap gently.

"Come in," I say. "I'm home."
I'm home.

The Road Not Taken

by A.J. Glenn

Plants and fish and a cozy fire
And I with my book before I retire.
All is so safe and as it should be.
The dogs lie here dreaming of rabbits and me.
While I watch dancing letters on page after page
And dream past the walls of my upholstered cage.
Dream of freedom I thought too great a chance.
Dream of an almost-captured romance.
I smile at your memory as I put down my book,
Envision the road that I almost took.
I wonder if other arms hold you tonight.
Then I turn off my thoughts as I turn out the light.



HIGHLAND TRAIL by Charles Sowders

The Road

by Stephanie Gimble

A blacktop road with rocks embedded and bits of glass that glitter in the sun.

First walk this road, then run.

When you walk the images are crisp and clear.

Some have a listening ear, some will not hear.

When you run this road the images whirl and blur before your eyes.

Some are truth, some are lies.

The trees overhead sift the rays of sun and dapple my face with light.

Sometimes I'm wrong, sometimes I'm right.

The branches sway as the cool wind begins to blow.

I'll be your friend, you are my foe.

Leaves lie on the ground to show where winds have blown.

Some go together, some go alone.

Look up now, through the trees, to see patches of sky.

Some will laugh, some will cry.

Look around at the wild flower, do you call it a weed?

Some will follow, some will lead.

Walk and walk from sunset to dawn.

Some roads end, some go on.

Disappointment

by Noamie Byrum

Outside, her smile showed teeth,
but she still had gleaming, smooth hair,
flawlessly applied mascara,
and manicured hands that lightly clasped the clock.

Inside, little drops of hopes
formed a thousand rivulets of ache that
slowly dribbled toward her black pumps
leaving noiseless accordion fibres
in her armpits and abdomen and heart and thighs.

The ship had not sailed.
It was not going to.

Later, her direction was marked
by bloody footprints on dry grass.

The Green Peace

by Kenneth W. Morrow

Soldiers of Fortune
Soldiers of Glory
Soldiers for the cause of Peace
Hard, green, and faceless Men
Erupt the night with cordite Stench
Screams and shouts of Pain and Death
Children burst red and lie stiller than Stone
The steel-grey birds scream Overhead
The black is broken, the alleys Roar
With flames and thick black Smoke —
Women weep, then are silent.

Where is their beloved Peace
Nothing but death surrounds us Now
Burning flesh and broken Brick
Giant tears, bright crimson Faces
Crumbled houses and shattered Dreams
All is lost, hope and faith, nothing remains — Desolation

And the green hordes forge Onward
Reaching for "Peace" in the nearest village.

untitled

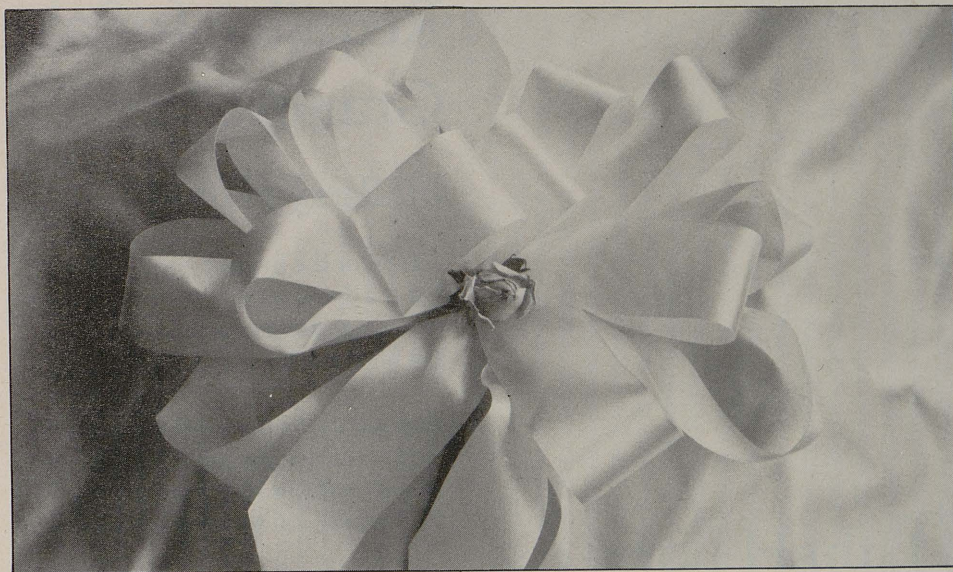
by Betsy Haynes

You, of the laughing eyes,
You are in love with her.
You also hold a special place
In my heart.
But she holds you captive.
How I would like to set you free.
I hate to see the day she drops you.
I don't want to see you plummet
To the ground
Like a broken-winged dream.
But I will be there to
Help mend your dreams,
Set you on your feet again,
And put the laugh
Back into your eyes.

Fountains

by Betsy Haynes

I saw a little girl today,
Watching the fountain.
Joy and wonderment
Shone in her face.
Her mother stood back,
And reminded her not to fall in,
And shared in her simple joy,
With the reservations
The world gives to "grown-ups."
I also shared in the little girl's joy.
But I, like her mother,
Felt the constant reminder
Of an unkind world
Not appeased by a joy
As simple as a fountain.
I wished for those carefree days,
But I know that we,
Who have lost our innocence,
Must keep the world a place
Where innocence can exist
In little girls that watch the fountain.



WEDDING FLOWERS by Nancy Michalewicz

Arguing with Gert

by Pat Logan

Now, Gertrude, look here,
some roses somewhere
may be roses that are roses that are roses.
I admit
that some of those
will be but a rose, a rose.

But not so
with my rose.

Alice B.
would agree
with me.

My rose is pink and petite,
in fact, a sweetheart rose.

Its petals lie flat
crushed inside the mailman's bag
inside the letter
he brings me.

It is different
from all its sister roses everywhere.

My crushed rose's perfume
is big for such a tiny rose
and slightly acrid with the nose up close.

I might assume
that nobody ever sent you a rose, Miss Stein.
All roses may be the same to you —
but my rose is mine.

0.65

by Bruce Nelson

Birthdays — are just the clicking
of the taxi's meter
during a ride
in which you've forgotten
where
you've told the driver to go.

The fare is rising.
And eyes, in the mirror, are watching.
Matter of time
before he knows
you have nothing, nothing at all
to pay with
and
He
makes you get
out.

Backwards and Forwards

by Noamie Byrum

Someday we'll be withered-up old women with thin hair and thick joints
Rocking down whatever river is left on the front porch, talking,
talking, about babies; just talk.
Bony fingers tying threads,
Quilting time with tiny pieces,
Our souls that howled as quiet as an autumn twilight.
Dimmed eyes not dazzled by the swoop of eagles,
Ears untuned to the crash of waves against high cliffs,
Hearts unshaken by the magic of music in the moonlight,
Eddying into the hollow silence.

They'll see the gaping mouth, the arms dangling like wounded wings,
the rocker stopped.
They'll believe it was an easy death.

They will not know, when they come to take the husk away,
the haunted minds, the storms that raged there,
The boundless depths explored, the eyes that saw.

Requiem for a Grandfather

by Betsy Haynes

Life is for the living,
Let the dying wait in peace.
No herioc measures, please;
Let him take his ease.

Remember the love and joy he gave
And forget all the pain.
He will soon be at peace,
It's part of God's great plan.

Trust the Lord to hold him close
And comfort us as well.
We must live our lives on out
And abide in God's will.

A Special Gift of Life

by Deana Tedford

As we are but children,
Our goal is to have fun,
And as we have grown older,
Our childhood goal is done.

Our lives will soon begin to change,
And as we do not know,
Which way our lives will lead us,
Or what things we will sow.

With each hour passing,
Another day gone by,
Our busy days are ended,
With just another sigh.

Our troubles and our sorrows,
Too often take the place,
Of a simple "Hi" or a little smile,
That expresses every face.

Among decisions and pressures,
And new things coming about,
The most important thing in life,
Has come without a doubt.

That special gift called "children,"
That is sent from God above,
Is a gift we treasure dearly,
A gift with so much love.

There are no words that can express,
The love a child can give,
The precious moments that one
brings,
A true inspiration to live.

Those little hands, those little feet,
Are ones we now must guide,
And when I look into those eyes,
My heart is filled with pride.

For now I know this gift is real,
And much more than I see,
Is a familiar little someone,
Someone so much like me!

3¹/₂ and I Hadn't Seen Her Do a Thing

by Bruce Nelson

That clop-clop clopping coming round the corner
Is just gotta be, gonna be my littlest one
With smears of rouge and my wife's Sunday shoes on.
— S'cuse me while I dash for the camera:

closet door — camera bag
camera case — close-up lens
cut on flash

— I'm back, but of course the moment's gone;
My wife's still laughing and now the TV's on.

That ho-ho- ho-ing happening from the tub
Is just gotta be, gonna be my rub-a-dub dear
With a sudsy 'stache and a bubbly St. Nick beard.
— S'cuse me while I scream for the camera:
Honey, where?

No, I moved it from there.
Honey, where?
Which, tell me, which chair?
— I'm back but these pesky moments won't remain;
My wife wipes a tear, and the bubbles go down the drain.

That bray-bray braying bawling from the stage
Is gotta be, gonna be my preschool star
With pointy ears, a pinned-on tail — the very best donkey there by far.
— S'cuse me, sir, ma'am, while I squeeze toward the stage:
She's in view — She's in focus
She's smiling — She's

I'm back in my seat;
The camera, out of film, missed the shot.
But I, being there — for once — did not.
Let me tell you about it.



TJC STUDENT by Charline Wallis

Tomorrow

by Charlotte Allen

Sometimes I think a person
Can love someone too much
Need a touch too much
And not be given enough,
Sometimes I think we're like that
Even though we'd hate to admit it
So we keep it
Hidden even from ourselves.

But we've got today to love and to
live
Tonight if we manage to make it
through this day
And if we're lucky we might
have the next day
But tomorrow was never ours
to give.

Sometimes I'm prone to wonder
About the borderline that lies
With its no trespassing sign
Just between love and hate,
And just how many times
Have we been the guilty party
That passed over its boundary
Time after time again.

But we've got today to love and
to live
Tonight if we make it through
this day
And if we're lucky we might have
the next day
But tomorrow has never been
ours to give.

Graduation

by Patricia Bynum

A fleeting moment
of glory adorned with the
aura of applause.

School Days, School Daze

by Judith Garner

Students today are quite different than they were back in the "good old days." The goodness or badness of this, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. As to my personal opinion, I am quick to plead the fifth.

I must admit that I am a little curious as to what has become of the dress code. It was the first day of my first class in college. Bedecked in my Sunday best, I sat solemnly awaiting for the bell to ring, when what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a pair of legs! It was quite evident that these legs belonged to a specimen of the male species, or else someone had just cause to write a letter of complaint to Nair! Needless to say, I was shocked. Back in the "good old days" a female was the one who belonged to the set of ankles.

Skiping classes was once a favorite pastime of mine. If I didn't have a legitimate disease, I invented one. As a matter of fact, I possess a trophy that would make Coach McGinty green with envy. It was presented to me by the McCormick Corporation for being their top consumer. I shudder to think how many salty pepper and garlic sodas I

have inhaled. Now I avoid absenteeism like the plague. I'm not saying that I carry a drugstore in my book satchel, but the local pharmacists do keep my phone number handy in case they need supplies.

Perhaps the most drastic change I have encountered since beginning TJC is one that is closely related to the auto industry. Seriously, mornings around my residence are total chaos. I drag two reluctant children out of bed before break of dawn in order to be ready to leave the house by 5:15 so I will not be late for my 10 o'clock class. As I patiently wait for the signal light to turn green, I pull a sock on here and shove a shoe on there.

While precariously weaving in and out of traffic, I subconsciously note any and all cars sporting TJC parking stickers. These vehicles I avoid at all costs. Like myself, their only goal is to locate an empty parking space within a 30-mile

radius of the campus, and heaven help anything that gets in the way! In the "good old days" the student who had his or her own car was rare indeed. A few lucky souls got dear old Mom to transport them to school and back each day. Unfortunately, I was never that fortunate. However, like the postal service, neither rain nor sleet nor snow ever kept me from my appointed classes. Now that I think about it, I really do believe that it rained, sleeted and snowed a lot more than it does now.

By now you are probably wondering if I yearn for the "good old days." You bet your sweet bippy I do, everytime I stand in line for three hours to obtain a time permit to register for classes that were closed two months ago. As for when I receive my associate degree, well, that is another story. It will then be bye-bye "good old days," hello world.

The Happening: Written 1947

by Pat Logan

I am filled with murmur
and mellow odor
for there is bustle here
and perfume hanging high on airy wings.

Now I glow with little slivers of light,
and laugh and
throw wide my arms to welcome him
who comes with polished shoes and white-starched shirt.

But soon the calm of hurried movements stilled
settles upon my empty self
while reddened fingernails and clicking heels
fade from my sight and sound.

The week will pass
and it will happen again —
I am the dorm on Saturday night.

Thoughts from Junior

by Patricia Bynum

Though some come to me passionately, hungrily — thirsting for more.
Yet some come born of a fear of spreading their wings too far.
Lost, some come, directionless, not knowing where else to go.
Eagerly come others, striding purposefully;
Retracing their steps, some come back to me, once overlooking me,
Just as some, even beyond my years, finally come, often hesitantly.
Unlike others, I embrace you all with open arms, knowing I will lose you.
New ones come as others rush off and pursue higher aspirations.
It seems some also become discouraged and leave, ambitions growing pale;
Or some decide I'm not for them and toss me aside, carelessly.
Ready to enter the world of occupations, some depart better prepared;
Certainly all who leave retain a part of me, acknowledged or not.
Oh, I give to you now and to others later, for there always will be a need.
Looking at me some may say I'm out-dated, old-fashioned, out-of-step;
Little do they realize, for they don't stop and really get to know me.
Even I've grown over the years, and continue to grow,
Guiding those who come to me, using a more personal touch than others,
Ever strengthening and applauding each one's steps, whether large or small.

A Legacy

by Betty Nelson

I have my father's eyebrows.

When people meet me, their eyes follow my face to the area below my forehead where the hair is thick and black, with no apparent rhyme or reason to its growth. My grandfather says bushy eyebrows are a sign of intelligence. He would. He looks just like my dad.

Being linked to my father via the eyebrow is somewhat akin to having a tattoo — it's the answer to the question "any distinguishing marks or features?" that identifies me as a member of his clan. From generation to generation, heavy growth above the eyes have united them in their quests for fame, fortune and the furthering of the family name.

There's only one problem. I am the only daughter of an only son and my grandfather, the last of his breed, is concerned about the family name passing away instead of being passed on.

One afternoon, I put aside my trepidations about visiting him because of his provincial way of making my blood boil and I go to his house, the house my father grew up in, the one filled with the sights and sounds of long-departed O'Connors. My grandfather brings up the subject again.

"What is the big deal, Pamp? I am as much an O'Connor as you or Dad . . . Why do you get so upset about a name," I want to know.

"Because, my child," he replies, in his *let's be serious* voice, "you are a female. You will marry a male. You will assume his last name. Therefore, your children will carry another name that is not O'Connor. My legacy is ending."

Trying to argue with my grandfather is unfortunately an almost impossible task because, like the eyebrows, the O'Connors have passed down from generation to generation an irrefutable sense of stubbornness. My grandmother used to like to call it pigheadness.

"Just because" gets a big workout in the O'Connor household.

"It is only a name, for Christ's sake," I counter. "Am I not as much of an O'Connor as you are?"

Thinking I really had an answer for him, I continue, "If it's that important to you, that the O'Connor name not die out, when I get married, I'll keep my maiden name and then, if I have children, they will

take my name. OK?"

Thinking that I had really proven my point, that the old man would surely go to his grave a happy man, I saw a horrified look pass over his face and his bushy eyebrows knot together.

"Oh my God, no. You can't do that. Everyone would think you had illegitimate children! And besides, you just don't do that. You should take your husband's name because that's the way it's always been done," my grandfather said, assuming the posture that he had made HIS point and that I would forget this foolishness and realize that because of me, a dynasty would end.

If only those X and Y chromosomes had been more attentive at my conception.

"Pamp, listen. If I remember my high school biology correctly, I am as much genetically an O'Connor as you or Dad. I am not less than because I am a girl."

I emphasized the word "girl" for his sake. It's something he can relate to; a slight, he believes, only to me. It's not enough that I am over the age of 18. To Pamp, I won't be a woman until I am wed and have borne children. But, that's another argument.

My grandfather is a big man and his voice is fortissimo to match. Even though he doesn't always have a lot to say, when he does, you can't

help but listen. You have no choice; his voice carries over to the next county.

After my remarks about O'Connor genes, I noticed the rocking of his chair had stopped. He was leaning forward, his hands squeezing the ends of the armrests as if he was on a white-knuckle flight to Dallas. Unable to move from his glare, I prepared myself for the barrage.

"Who the hell do you think you are? Margaret O'Connor has decided to change the course of things. Young lady, you just think back all through history. Who carried on the family name? The women? Hell, no, it's been the men. All the family research is done through the men, right? How many families trace their name back through the women, just tell me how many? You go through the wife's line and, my God, you'd come up with fifty million names. The man's name gives it continuity." Pamp's face was red.

I knew he was correct, in a warped, historical way. In the little genealogical research I had done, I found that you traced O'Connors back through all the Johns, Samuels, Hezekiahs and Ezekiels, not the Sarahs, Elizabeths and Marys. Most of the women were lucky if they got a mention, like "John O'Connor and wife traveled from Georgia to Texas in 1893."

"Don't you see, Pamp, that it is

just not fair that the women who have gone before us are relegated to what amounts to anonymity when we search for our roots while the men bask in the eternal limelight."

I was on a roll now. Pamp had leaned back in the chair and had released the armrests. I thought I saw a flicker of light in the narrow tunnel of his mind.

He was looking at a framed photograph on the wall, just over my head. It was a picture of my grandmother, her hair covered with a bandana of some kind, her cotton dress covered with a floral print apron. She is feeding the chickens on a dry, brown West Texas day, and just out of her line of vision, is her brindle cat, sneaking up, about to create a scene of ruffled feathers, squeally squawks and the closest thing to a profanity my grandmother knew, a loud, "You dad-gum cat, git away from those chickens!"

"She always wanted to go to Chicago," Pamp was saying to no one in particular.

My grandmother's sister, Mae, at age 18, made a break from her family that left people in the dusty West Texas town they had grown up in talking for years. Mae one day said she just thought there was more to life than marrying Joe Simons, having children and farming.

So, she went to Chicago and never came back home. Mae would write my grandmother, telling her about her job in a big office building, the cars, the people, the smells of Chicago.

My grandmother used to get out her trunk and show me photographs of Mae and the letters she had written. And, to me, at the young age of eight or nine, before I knew any better, Mae represented something nebulous. She wasn't in the parameters of my definition of "grownup." "You mean she never got married?" I'd ask my grandmother. She went to Chicago all by herself and got a job and she never had any kids?

As I got older, after my grandmother died, I went back to that old trunk and re-read some of Mae's letters. I began to realize that although times had not always been easy for Mae in Chicago, she would tell my grandmother it was okay because in a sense she had no one to blame but herself. And, that's what she wanted.

I know that it is hard for you to understand, dear Lillie, but this is something I had to do. I just felt something so deep inside me that just wouldn't let me stay there. I felt like I would just dry up and blow away in one of those dust storms. I do miss you so much and do wish you could come visit. Please know that this was my decision. I did what I wanted to do. I know that we have always been taught not to be selfish and I do not think I am. It is more than that.

I love you, sweet sister.

Although my grandmother never said so, I know that Gran understood why Mae had gone to Chicago and it made her sad, not about Mae but for herself.

Gran and I would be in her room, sitting cross-legged on the floor, the contents of her trunk strewn about the room and I'd keep on asking questions until my grandmother could nod her head no more, her eyes misty from remembering, and she'd put away all the pictures and letters and close the trunk.

"You know, sweetie," my grandmother would say, cupping my chin in her hand, "I think maybe there's some Mae in you."

"I feel real bad that she never got to see her sister again," Pamp said, his eyes focusing again on me and the present.

I knew that my grandparents, in their many, many years of marriage, while it had not been perfect, had in the latter years, settled into a symbiotic relationship. Gran used to tell me that when they first got married, Pamp wore the pants in their family and I wondered what she meant. But, as time worn on, I noticed Gran was wearing pants, too.

Thinking about them together and how much Pamp really seemed to miss my grandmother, I began to realize that what I wanted was Pamp to see that I was a part of much more than just the O'Connors and their bushy eyebrows.

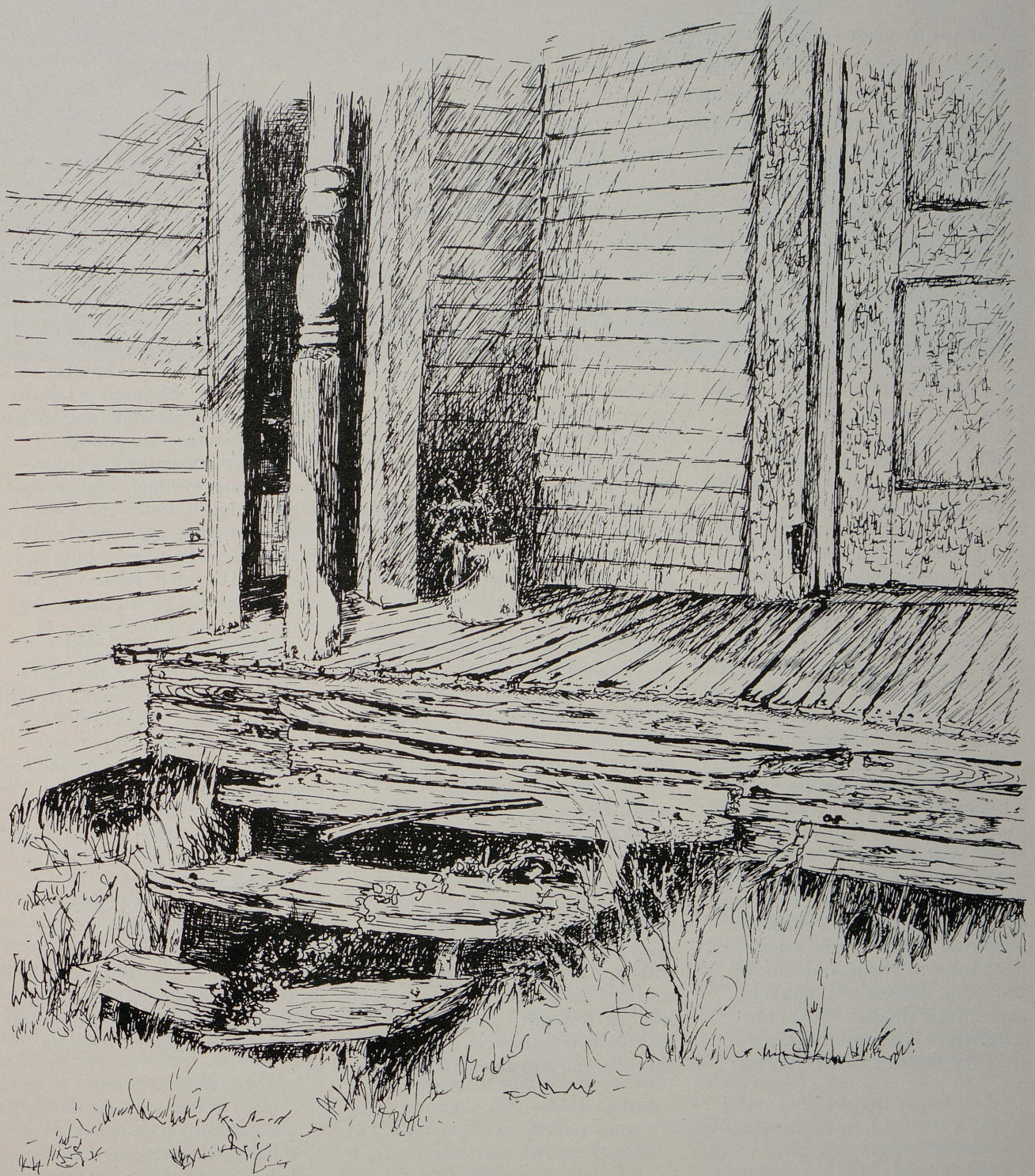
"Pamp, don't you see that I am your legacy. As your grandchild, whether I was born male or female, I am what makes you live on and on. Because of you and Gran, I'm here and someone else will be here, too, when I have children. It doesn't matter what my last name is. What matters is that I have pieces of you two, like those things in Gran's trunk and those pictures of you on your wall to show my offspring when they ask about their family."

Pamp was smiling.

"And, besides, I'll need proof that these eyebrows aren't my fault."

Red and Yellow leaves
Falling to the ground to rest
Like a patchwork quilt.

*By Raymond Maldonado,
Lori Starks,
Leo Utz*



Grandmother the Great

by Chehreh Badii

Grandmother spent most of her life in a small city bringing up ten children. She and her nuclear family lived in Abadaan, Iran. Grandmother was well described by her family and friends as being a caring, detached, and energetic human being.

Along with her youthful beauty, Grandmother was overwhelmingly caring about her family. In her younger days, Grandmother had long, wavy, brown hair which was always worn in braids; also, she retained a fair skin without the use of cosmetics. At sixteen, she married Grandfather, Muhammad Labib. According to Persian custom in those days, it was better for young ladies to be married early in life.

By the age of eighteen, Grandmother had her first child, Roshan. Twenty years later, she had her tenth and final child, my mother Lili. In between the years, her five sons and other three daughters were born. Their names are Sohrab, Parviz, Freidoun, Mehry, Firouz, Dokhy, Jahangeer, and Monireh. Single-handedly, Grandmother took care of all her children with an equal amount of love and affection. She brought up the children all by herself because Grandfather's occupation did not allow him to spend a great deal of time at home. His occupation was to travel and teach the Esperanto language in countries like Japan, India, China, and Greece. In spite of this, Grandmother kept strong in times of struggle.

Not only did Grandmother care for her own family, she also cared for people outside of her family. For example, one day she noticed that a fifteen year old boy called Ehsan would occasionally show up in her neighborhood. She became curious about him because he was always rendering service to who ever asked him. Some of his efforts included shopping, housework, or taking care of little children. It was not long before Grandmother discovered that this boy did not have a

home; therefore she asked him if he would like to be adopted into her own family. Ehsan's adoption astonished the rest of the family. After all, Grandmother had reared ten children, and they naturally expected her to be exhausted. Apparently, Grandmother cared for that young boy as much as she cared for her own sons.

Since Grandmother suffered from many unhappy incidents which occurred in her days, she gradually gained a more detached outlook on her life. A heart-breaking incident for Grandmother was when her son Jahangeer took his own life at the age of twenty-six. It was a confusing moment for her because she had wished he had come to her in times of trouble. At this point, Grandmother learned that she could not provide everything for her children as she used to. She had to let them act independently and let them make their own mistakes.

As Grandmother grew older, she became more and more detached. Grandmother did not verbally express her love towards her grandchildren; instead, at one point or another, she tried to express her love for them through a good deed. I have known that since we were children, she was always there when

we needed her. For example, if our parents decided to go out some nights, Grandmother would volunteer to take care of us.

In her old age, Grandmother still has energy left. She used to take us out for occasional walks and tell us stories when we were young. I specifically remember one story. One summer evening, when everyone had gone to sleep, and everywhere was quiet, a stranger broke into my Grandmother's house and attempted to rob it. When Grandmother heard of his footsteps, she chased him out of her home and down the streets, yelling and screaming. Before long, the entire neighborhood chased after him with sticks and stones. The burglar was caught and turned in to the police.

Having Grandmother around has been an educational experience. She has been able to tell us how the world was. In a way, she has helped us realize that we have come a long way. At the present moment, Grandmother lives in Garland, Texas near her daughter, Mehry. Although she has been far away from her home country for many years, she still maintains much of the Persian culture and encourages us, her grandchildren, to do the same.



HUNG OUT TO DRY by Mike Powell

Momma's Ironing

by Noamie Byrum

No matter how much I wanted my mother to be otherwise, she was simply not a cookie-baker or a lap-holder or a hug-giver. When I was a little girl, not only did I yearn for her to be all of those things for me, but I also wanted to be the focus of her life. Instead, she divided her attention between me, who was the baby, and my four brothers, my daddy, Aunt Eunie Hancock, who often stayed with us, Aunt Maisie and Uncle George, who lived in our garage, feeble old Aunt Pearl and Uncle Will Sims, who lived across the street, the McCurley brood, who also lived across the street and who constantly needed their ringworms or something doctored, a Camp Fire group, a vegetable garden with which she fed all of us and a full-time job as a nurse. I often needed her to touch me, and I longed to be important to her. I felt sure that she did not understand my heavy heart.

Occasionally, however, she

would tell me stories. Sometimes, while she handed me plates to dry after supper or while I lay on the rose-colored chenille bedspread in the back bedroom and watched her iron khaki shirts, her stories would flash through our conversations like distant summer lightning, ragged blue loops incredibly high and wide and deep to illumine, however briefly, her remote and cloudy childhood.

Most often, these glimpses of her early days were not meant as autobiographical entertainments. They were, rather, designed to send implied messages during times of internal storms — mine or hers or both. These messages were morals or truths which she said would put salt in my spring — equivalent, I guess, to grit in my craw. Or they were meant to illustrate that our family already had salt in its spring. She would lay out the story; I would root out what she was really saying.

I must have been about ten when I felt that I had enough salt in my spring. So I left home. I remember that I told Momma goodbye out in the wash shed; she had her arms in a number three wash tub right up to her elbows, and she had wooden clothes pins fastened around the edge of her flowered apron.

"Life here," I told Momma, "is tiresome."

Prudently, I loaded up a grocery sack with peanut butter and my paper dolls, stuffed two jar lids into my shirt for bosoms, and took off barefooted down the white sandy road. I recall that the sand was hot and that my bosoms kept falling out. I don't recall how soon after lunch-time I went home.

Before bedtime that night I had two surprise treats. One was when Momma told me to open the icebox for something I liked: behold, there was a can of apricots. I didn't have to share the can with anybody, so I

didn't. I got in my tire swing in the twilight under the persimmon tree to eat the fruit with my fingers, and then to drink the juice. After that treat, I got to bathe outside as long as I wanted to with the waterhose and a bar of ivory soap. In the early darkness of the yard I could see the light bulb glimmering through the back bedroom windows and the June bugs crawling on the screens.

I wanted to sulk and to prolong my adventures outside, but I couldn't think of any reason to. Besides, my fingers were shriveled up, everyone else was inside and it was ironing night for Momma.

Momma's back was to me, and she was very quiet when I climbed onto the bed. Then, after a long silence, with just the hiss of the hot iron on starched damp cotton for company she asked me what I had seen on my trip that day. I told her about some roses on the corner and a big chow dog down the road. After another long silence, without looking at me, she told me a story.

She said, "When I was a little girl we lived in the old dogtrot house in the country where I was born and where you was born later. All around was just thick woods and cornfields. Sometimes, when I felt very lonely and sad, I would just wonder and wonder what it would be like to have a momma, for mine had died when I was six days old. I loved Dad, but other little girls had a momma.

"The winter nights was specially bad, for then I felt most abandoned. But three times, when I was loneliest and my heart was breaking, I looked out into the darkness and saw something wonderful. You know what I saw?"

That was my cue to get up on one elbow from the bed, big-eyed, to say, "No, ma'am."

"Well," she paused to hang up a shirt and shake out another, "I saw a light. It looked like a lantern someone was carrying, and it swung and jounced along about the height off the ground that it would if a grown up was carrying it. Except that there wasn't a person there. Just the light.

"I would watch it move around under the bare trees near my side of the house and feel glad."

I was sitting up by that time to ask, "You weren't scared, Momma?"

"No, for I knew what it was.

Some people have tried to tell me since then that what I saw was just swamp gas, but I know better."

Gently, my mother sat the iron up on its heel and turned from her ironing to face me. With memory of a childhood joy shining on her worn face, she leaned confidently toward the bed as she whispered to me, our heads nearly touching.

"That light. That light was my mother come to see about me in the

night. It was her spirit out there carrying that lantern, not gone from me at all, near me all the time, even if I couldn't see her, reaching out to me through all that distance and time, even through death."

I remember, afterwards, the rose-colored softness of the big bed, the smell of the sweet, hot cloth of the ironing board, and Momma nodding her head up and down. Then she looked steadily at me a long time with her green-gray eyes, and I saw her with my brown ones. In the hush, she smiled at me and I at her.

My heart was singing.



WHITHER? by Charline Wallis

Sister of the Sun

by Judy Caswell

Her parchment hands speak of honest work.
They grasp other hands firmly, confidently.
And yet, the faces of the white and painted hands
That lift teacups in the afternoon turn from her.

She lives beneath the sky breaking clods and pulling weeds
In the garden furrowing behind her ragged house.
Working alone, she speaks softly to herself,
Swirling her words in the silent morning air.

She reads yellow, crumbling newspapers and molding books.
And while her hoe breaks up clods, she plays the parts
Of people living or of those living in her books.
Her sensitivity to what others know and feel,
Is as simple, deep, and straight as the furrowed
Ground beneath her bare feet.

She laces her fingers around clumps of weeds,
And pulls the green peasants from the earth.
She feels them tugging, clinging to their mother, the soil.
She plays the part of weeds and knows they have
The strength of God in their determined grip for life.

Her simple heart caresses these peasants growing in Edenic abandon,
Throwing their green blades toward the sun.
Shuddering at her thoughtlessness, she leaves them to the garden,
And runs barefoot through the meadow, picking daisies.

God, grant her the feet of Artemis,
So she will run like the sister of Apollo, eluding the grasping dominion
Of the vapid, dainty hands lifting teacups in stuffy rooms,
Hands that say her life is worthless.
Hands that say her life is dirt.

I Thank My Lord

by Stephanie Gimble

I thank the Lord
For tents of green
For ground below
For things unseen
For beating heart
And clever brain
For early sunrise
And spring-felt rain
For songs of joy
Shouted loud
For secrets soft
As summer cloud
For ice cream melted
By the sun
For things I've done
And those to come
For rainbows stretching
Cross the sky
For sweet hello
And sad goodbye
For memories made
And future dreams
For all these special, special things
I thank my Lord.



HAND HEWN CHURCH by Charles Sowders



ROAD HOME by Jeri Hubbard

